

# Briefings

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## UNCLE SAM'S SHOWPIECE

*US mission in Geneva mounts major solar installation*

Who says the US can't be a shining light? This summer the greatest gas-guzzling nation the world has ever seen showed a more sustainable face, unveiling a solar energy system atop its mission to the United Nations. Not the one in New York, but the one in Switzerland.

The array of photovoltaic panels extends across 950 square metres of the roof, walls and windows on the seven-storey building. Developed in partnership with Geneva's public power utility SIG (Services Industriels de Geneve), the system is capable of feeding up to 118 kilowatts into the canton's grid, enough to cover the average needs of nearly 40 houses. SIG buys all the output, at the special rate it pays to 'green' producers. The US mission buys a lot more power than this from SIG, but expects the solar installation to cover at least 5% of its needs this year. Coupled with savings from the shading effect of the photovoltaic panels, the \$1.6 million project should pay for itself within 10 years – and keep on running for a further 20.

Meanwhile, it'll also help SIG with its target of increasing solar energy production in Geneva from the current two megawatts to five by 2008. The canton currently gets 7% of its supplies from 'green' renewables (including solar), a massive 88% from large-scale hydro, and only 5% from non-renewable sources (including waste incineration). – *Sandra Cole*

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Dazzling array for the diplomats and big savings on power